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ALBERTA Street News

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Safe Injection Sites

By Linda Dumont

I live in an inner city neighbourhood just a half a block from The Mustard Seed and the Boyle McCauley Health Centre. When the snow melted, all the debris that had been hidden was revealed. Among the bits of paper and other trash out on the dead grass beside the front sidewalk, there were a number of discarded needles that had to be picked up. There are disposal boxes a few blocks away where people can safely deposit their used needles, but many still end up on the ground.

Last fall I was issued a $230 fine from the city because, they said in the complaint, the garbage man was poked with a needle when picking up the garbage out back. They did not even issue a warning to please comply before such and such a date, but sent the bill along with the notice to clean up. When I went out back, there wasn't even any garbage to be picked up. The needle wasn't there anymore, either. That needle alone was enough for the city to issue a fine! I thought about protesting, but when I phoned the bylaw office, the woman to whom I spoke sounded very hostile and totally unsympathetic. She probably was picturing me as the drug user because I live downtown.

I paid the bill. I wrote out a cheque, put it in an envelope and mailed it the next day.

There are people walking and congregating in the back alley. One of them probably dropped off the needle by the garbage, but I am still held responsible for whatever is left on the property.

As a pet owner, I do have small injection needles in my veterinary kit that I use to give three in one distemper shots to the cats, but those would not have been lying on the ground in the back alley.

I have a friend, who is an insulin dependent diabetic and she uses an injection pen but some diabetics that I worked with in the past used injection needles. They always had a safe disposal box for used needles.

It is because of the problem of needles left lying around by drug users that I see the merit of safe injection sites. They offer safety not only for the addict but also for the residents of his or her community in that fewer needles will be strewn about on the streets.

There are also many health benefits for the drug users. Recently the 23 year old daughter of one of my friends had her leg amputated due to an infection resulting from a dirty needle.– more on pages 14 -15

Founder/Editor: Linda Dumont
Design and layout: Linda Dumont
Writers: Maria B., Robert Champion, John Zapantis, Joanne Benger, Timothy Wild, Michelle Black, Sharon Austin, Linda Dumont, Vivian Risby, Allan Sheppard, Linda Roan
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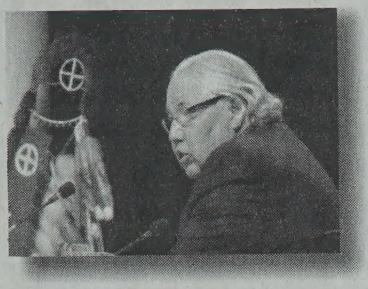
Alberta Street News
9533-106A Avenue Edmonton, Alberta, T5H 0S9
780-428-0805 dumontlc@hotmail.com

THE VIEWS PRESENTED ARE THOSE OF THE CONTRIBUTORS.

Rhetoric? Check. Symbolism? Check. Action? Pending. Results? We'll see.



Prime Minister Trudeau adds to his good words and moves on the Aboriginal file; now comes the hard part.

With his appointment of Justice Murray Sinclair (fresh off an exemplary seven-year run as chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada—the TRC) to the Canadian Senate, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau demonstrated once again his awareness of the rhetorical and symbolic levers of power at his disposal and showed he knows how to use them to his advantage. Whether he will use them to the benefit of Canada's Aboriginal peoples—and, by fair extension, all Canadians—remains to be seen: much depends on how well he translates his mastery of rhetoric and symbolism into action and results: on how well he follows through on promises and commitments made while campaigning and during his first months in office. He has made a good start; but it is only a start.

Six of the seven senators appointed on 18 March 2016 are strangers to me. But if their credentials and records of service approach those of Senator Sinclair, they are worthy appointments to a chamber dedicated to "sober second thought" on matters of legislation, governance, and the integrity of both.

I am of many minds on the Senate and possible reforms. Having been born, educated, and lived for almost eight decades in a nominal democracy, I cling (with increasingly desperate hope) to the notion that our best and most legitimate representatives are those whom we have elected: because we (collectively) choose them and, perhaps even more importantly, because we can unchoose them: we can "throw the bums out" at the next election, if they displease us. (In theory: the practice is often less than ideally responsive, at least to me and my politics.)

The electoral process is a hit-or-miss affair. It turns up inspired (and inspiring) choices, but it also rewards incompetents, charlatans, ideologues, demagogues; with all parties blessed or burdened with some of each. Still, I reluctantly agree with Winston Churchill's observation: "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."

Government is inherently prone to disappoint, given the diversity of our populations and the great and growing complexity of needs and wants government must identify and juggle: democracy is merely our least bad option.

Government by the appointed is just as likely to disappoint as government by the elected; more so when the elected representatives doing the appointing are countable among the incompetents, charlatans, ideologues, and demagogues.

But we are also served—on the whole well—by an appointed judiciary in Canada. There may be some Canadians who would "democratize" the appointment of judges; I am not one of them. I see Canada's judiciary as a model for an appointed Senate—one that is perhaps not free from politics and partisanship but has the tools and can demonstrate a will to resist the influence of politics and partisanship. Murray Sinclair could serve as template (not because he was a judge, but because he achieved excellence in service to the country) for appointments to a less political and partisan Senate.

After practicing human rights and Aboriginal law, Sinclair served as a judge on the Provincial Court of Manitoba and the Court of Queen's Bench of Manitoba. Before agreeing in 2009 to chair the TRC, he served as co-commissioner of Manitoba's Public Inquiry into the Administration of Justice and Aboriginal People (The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry) and reported on a study into the deaths of children during cardiac surgery.

News of Sinclair's appointment to the Senate reminded me that I had neglected a commitment to read the TRC's final report. It is a daunting task (the report alone runs to 10 volumes and many thousands of pages), but worth the effort: a short ramble through the summary report,Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future, yielded rich food for thought, including this statement from Prime Minister Sir John A.Macdonald, explaining his rationale for residential schools to the House of Commons in 1883:

"When the school is on the reserve the child lives with its parents, who are savages; he is surrounded by savages, and though he may learn to read and write his habits, and training and mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write. It has been strongly pressed on myself, as the head of the Department, that Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men."(Emphases added.)

Everything Canadians need to know (but seem unwilling to accept) about the inspiration, motives, and goals of our residential school policy is contained in those two sentences and 107 words: in order to "acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men" and thereby avoidbecoming mere "savages who can read and write," Aboriginal children must be "withdrawn (a soft word for a hard reality) as much (and, we know, often geographically as far) as possible from the parental influence." They must be taught in "industrial schools," where the descriptionindustrial seems to refer less to the content than the process of their education; not to the teaching of industrial skills but to the use of industrial methods—mass production, economies of scale, rigid adherence to processes and schedules, enforced conformity; follow the rules, do what you are told—to teach and to discipline.

Why? Because their parents were "savages," as were their grandparents, extended families, and adult members of their communities. "Savage," as a noun, has two meanings, according to the Canadian Oxford Dictionary: "archaic offensive a member of a primitive tribe (and) 2. a cruel or barbarous person," in which "barbarous" means "1. uncivilized 2. cruel 3. coarse and unrefined."

Prime Minister Macdonald undoubtedly had the first, archaic meaning in mind: the Indigenous peoples of the land that was or was to become part of Canada

Continued on page 4

Rhetoric? Check. Symbolism? Check. Action? Pending. Results? We'll see.- contnued from page 3

were non-Christian non literates whose subsistence economies and land-based lifestyles were uncivilized: out of step—when they were not inconveniently in conflict—with an industrial revolution in manufacturing, agriculture, and transportation that was being distributed selectively but indiscriminately by the British Empire and its most subservient colonies, such as Canada.

I do not condemn Prime Minister Macdonald and his contemporaries for attitudes and behaviour that are now considered offensive (though not, sadly, by all Canadians) but were in the social and political mainstream of their time. I acknowledge that their policies and actions were arguably more benign (or less cruel) than those enacted at roughly the same time by the British in the homeland (recall the Highland Clearances) and other parts of their empire, the Spanish and Portuguese in Central and South America, the French and Portuguese in Africa, and especially the Belgians in what is now the Congo republics, Rwanda, and Burundi. They thought they were doing the right thing by their ethical, moral, social, political, and commercial standards and there were few reformers around to argue, persuade, or demonstrate otherwise.

But I do condemn the social and political descendants of Macdonald and his ilk, who delude themselves that they occupy—more than that, comprise—the mainstream in Canadian thought today. Social and political ethics and morality have evolved since Macdonald's time: not as far as I would want, but much further than (too) many Canadians are willing to acknowledge and accept.
What was acceptable then is not acceptable now. We should know better: we can and should do better.

I have in mind the family-values crowd: those among us, some of whom resist--rhetorically to the death in some cases—government, community, or institutional interference in the ways they believe families should conduct themselves and function in society. I count certain high-profile members of the previous federal government among that crowd, but have encountered similar ideology in other circles and affiliations.

The family, for them, is the basic social unit; the foundation of our society, our communities, and our government. To undermine the family—most notably, but not exclusively, through public education— is, for them, to shred the social fabric that holds our communities and nation together.

They are right. The family is the foundation unit in our society and in most societies. I do not share their rhetoric, and I do not support many of the issues they raise as threats against the family, but we agree on this: families are a key ingredient in the glue that holds communities and nations together. It follows inevitably that an attack on family is an attack on community and the nation; to destroy families is to communities and nations. When done as a deliberate policy, if is deliberately to destroy family, community, and nation. (To then blame the victims for the consequences of actions deliberately taken against them is the height of hypocrisy, which many Canadians have scaled.)

Can a policy to withdraw children "as much as possible from the parental influence" be judged as anything other than a deliberate effort to destroy the family?
The great Sir John A. and his contemporaries might be explained away as products of their relatively unenlightened times. But can we say the same about members of the family-values crowd today, who vociferously defend, when they do not deny the history and consequences of, Canada's residential school policy?

There is no excuse (though there may be a weak explanation) for a 140-year-old policy that has had demonstrably destructive impacts on Canada's Aboriginal peoples and on the country.

The effort to have Aboriginal children "acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men" was misguided. Worse still, it was a failure. At best, it risked producing "apples" (red on the outside, white inside) no longer accepted or comfortable in their home communities, never really accepted or comfortable in the "white" community. At worst, it produced deracinated outcasts who lack the skills to survive in an industrial society (in spite of efforts to give them that) and who lack the social safety nets once provided by families—nets that could help them resist the social ills that afflict so many of them today.

Given the results so far, Canadians do not have the means, the moral authority, or even the right to put Aboriginal societies we destroyed back together. Aboriginal themselves may be the only remaining hope to do that successfully. If so, Senator Sinclair could guide and expedite the process from the Senate. "I approach this appointment with hope for the future," he said in a statement after his appointment, "and remain committed to reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous people, something I believe in my heart is possible."

Not all Aboriginals are as hopeful or proactive about reconciliation as Sinclair. But at least he and the others, who support or may join him, have the right to use the word and offer the gestures and concessions it will involve.

The rest of us cannot dictate or prescribe: we can only accept and embrace whatever they choose to offer.
Graciously and gratefully.

By Allan Sheppard

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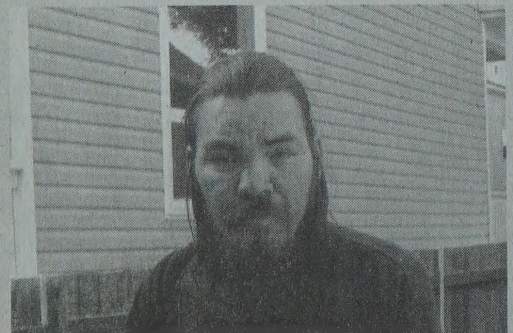


Eco-solidarity and the clock

By Timothy Wild

I have just finished reading Toward an eco-spirituality by the Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff. The volume suggests that if we are going to survive as a species with any measure of peace, dignity and integrity we need to radically change our existing models of production and consumption – both locally and internationally. In addition to more strategically and honestly employing the four Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle and reforest), Boff argues we must answer the question, "What is more important, to solve the problems that afflict humanity as a whole or to prop up the current economic and financial system?" Given his deep and abiding roots in liberation theology, it will come as no surprise where Boff lands. He notes "our current model of capitalist production is based on the false premise that the Earth is a secure source from which we might draw an infinite amount of resources to produce wealth with the least possible investment in the shortest amount of time." Boff then demonstrates that if we continue our current rate of economic expansion "we will need the resources of two planet Earths to meet the demand for consumption, a scenario that is obviously impossible". Impossible and catastrophic!

The book is particularly timely, following on the heels of Pope Francis' visionary encyclical Laudato Si', and is important in terms of demonstrating the role that faith communities can and must play in responding to critical environmental issues as stewards of Creation. However, in addition to considering the more theological aspects of eco-spirituality, the book also points to the centrality of advancing the political project of eco-solidarity, which requires neither spiritual nor religious foundations.

To be sure, this manifestation of solidarity will have significant implications. After all, we in the west, for example, can't argue that newly developing countries – such as China and India – forgo the "benefits" of industrial and economic growth without some measure of compensation and financial redistribution. Therefore, we need to ensure that the much needed and long overdue reductions in both consumption and production are accompanied by an equitable and just redistribution of income, work and resources – a point made many years ago by the philosopher Andre Gorz.

Green politics are the last best hope for an expansion of social justice.

Boff also suggests that not only does this eco-solidarity take a global dimension, it also takes an intergenerational perspective in that we are stewards of a collective and ongoing resource. And this is why I think green politics are the last best hope for an expansion of social justice; because it has a measure of blatant self-interest!

Much as it pains me to say, the language and values of socialism have lost much of its relevance to many people. While members of the "bourgeois cool" may have some vague sense of unease when it comes to social inequality, they are also loath to support progressive tax increases and advance the redistribution of resources to those surviving on the cultural, economic and social margins. Additionally, some may boldly argue that they worked hard for their money, so why should they share the fruits of their labour with others based on subjective notions of justice, equity and community. Yes, tragically, the ideas of a progressive politics based on values and solidarity is becoming less palatable to many. The environment, however, offers new opportunities for collective discussion, planning and action. We are all in this together and environmental degradation will affect us all – and our children too. Even right-wingers will realize the tremendous economic costs of trying to "stabilize the rising temperatures…that would allow life on this planet to continue". We all fear a Mad Max world! And we can use this self-interest to more critically evaluate the negative impact we are undoubtedly having on Mother Earth...and act quickly and in solidarity.

When it comes right down to it Boff doesn't really say anything new in his book, but he brings a lot of important information together in an accessible and provocative manner. He also issues a call for action. This is important. Temperatures are increasing, and we are already seeing the impact of environmental change everywhere. As I said, we need to act quickly because time is running out.

Fear Not

By Sharon Spencer

Great changes are upon us; our world is altering very quickly right before our very eyes, and it's scary. I'll admit it; change can always be frightening. Now that we are a global society and the world news is right at our finger tips, we are able to see world wide devastation first hand - sickness, earthquakes, famine etc. Fear abounds mightily. As Christians our identity is always hidden in Christ. The book of Matthew tells us how bad thing are going to be before the Lord comes back. If you know Jesus personally he tells you to look up for your "redemption draws nigh." In a sense what he's saying is, yes, thing are going to get bad but you are mine and you were never supposed to be a part of this world. Look to me. You are mine and your destination is heaven. I kept them safe when they walked though the Red Sea on dry ground, I kept them safe when they were in the ark and the rest of the world was washed away. I've kept them safe when they were in the fiery furnace. I promised not to leave you or forsake you. I'm your Creator. I know you intimately.

In Alberta we thought we were safe. The whole world came to our doorstop to live the good life and they did. People owned houses, cars, everything one needed to impress the others. Somewhere in the midst of it they forgot who was in control - God. Every time that the Israelites would leave him and serve other gods he would warn them and warn them how powerful he was and that devastation could come in a moment. I have to wonder if we have failed to give him his rightful place in our lives, number one, not second to greed or the love of money. Everywhere we look people are afraid because of lack of jobs when there used to be an abundance. Do we need to repent and ask forgiveness for forgetting him? Ask him to lead guide and direct your steps. I just want to leave you with this verse: 2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from there wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven and forgive their sins and heal there land. A really good promise! Let us return to the God of our childhood, strip ourselves of our idols and ask for mercy for forgetting Hm. In turn he will turn to us and heal our land. The Bible says he is a jealous God, who created us to be his sons and daughters through the sacrifice of Jesus.

NOVENA

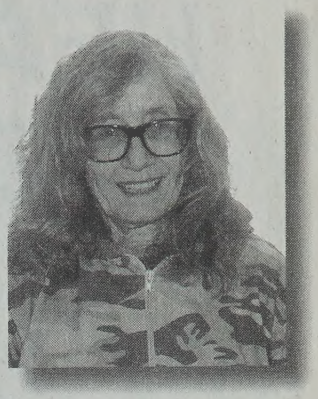
Divine Infant Jesus I want to give you my hands today. I want to serve you with all my heart and make you known and loved. Doing your work is the source of my inner peace and joy.

Divine Infant, I give you my hands to touch those I meet with your love and peace. I ask you to heal those in pain, to encourage the hopeless, to console the sorrowing and to provide for those in want. I ask you to reach out to the lonely. I especially plead for the many people suffering from great poverty and injustice.

Miraculous Infant, I believe that you love me and know all my needs. I place them in Your hands especially my present needs (Mention them). I trust in your love and care. I want to honour and praise you now and forever. Amen.

Repeat nine items daily for nine days and publish. J.N.

I'm confused



By Joanne Benger

1. Stores lower prices but they don't higher them.
2. Workers get laid off but their replacements don't get laid on.
3. Not everyone sweats wearing sweats.
4. What is a cellant? Ex-husband, excellant.
5. When streets are closed due to construction hoarding, what do they hoard?
6. Eggplant contains no eggs and most mincemeat contains no meat.
7. When you buy bed-in-a-bag, there is no bed.
8. Am I a cannibal if I eat baby back ribs?
9. People without a home are homeless but people without cars aren't carless.
10. Tuna comes in tins and salmon comes in cans but canned fruit comes in jars.
11. Why do they call it pulled pork? Where is it pulled from?
12. What kind of tables produce table potatoes?
13. A scoop of cat litter isn't the same as a newspaper scoop.
14. Why aren't old newspapers called oldspapers?
15. A Mr. is not married to his mistress? What does Mrs. Stand for?
16. If you have a million dollars you are a millionaire but if you have a hundred dollars you aren't a hundredaire.
17. Most sexagenarians are no longer sexy.
18. Butternut squash contains neither butter nor nuts and it isn't squashed.
19. Going uptown is the same as going downtown.
20. Why ain't it right to say ain't no more?
21. Plurals – one moose, two moose, one caboose, two cabooses, one goose, two geese.
22. Dog trainers train dogs but pan-handlers don't handle pans.
23. Why do they mock turtle soup?

My Life Style

By Joanne Benger

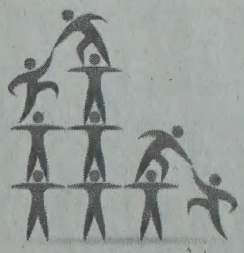
1. I like to buy designer clothing on the down low. I have been told they are fake clothes but the polyester and the plastic look real to me.
2. My designer purse was designed by Ardenes. It is 100% PU, a luxury leather from China. That's what I call real imported oriental luxury.
3. My jacket is a Joe Fresh original made of 100% polyester. Yes, 100%. How pure can you get?
4. My exclusive jeans are by George. I believe his last name starts with an A but he omitted it. They have the famous YKK zipper. I think that stands for You Kiss Kuality and I love quality.
5. My underswear is from the permier colletion and it simply oozes French sensuality for the label proudly proclaims "Fabrique en Bangladesh". I imagine Bangladesh is some famous French haberdashery.
6. I love the natural look. My hair has been naturally restyled by the prevailing wind.
7. My custom made plastic cutlery is from my favourite gourmet fast food outlet – Macdonalds.
8. My silver never saw a silver mine. My gold has no carats and my pearls have no culture thanks to modern science.
9. I buy my beauty products at the dollar store. They don't do much for my looks but they are kind to my wallet.
10. I always say you can't go wrong with fox or faux as some foreign designers spell it. That versatile little animal produces faux fur, faux leather and even faux pearls. I imagine the faux pearls are made out of the faux's teeth.
11. I have no air conditioner but I leave all my windows closed on hot days so people will think I do.
12. I don't have a regular cell phone. I just put a fancy clothes pin on my ear and talk loudly to myself in public.

HEALING WORDS

BY THE CMHA
WRITING FOR RECOVERY GROUP

Writing for Recovery

To recover is to write,
To live is to share,
To hear is divine,
To laugh is to love.
Together, hand in hand,
Together, we will stand.



By Michelle Black

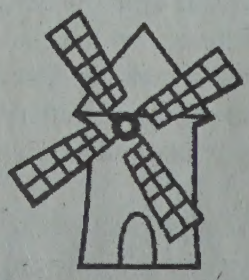
Winds of Hope ...

Far off in the distance, I see the windmill,
Standing strong and waiting for the wind,
Waiting for the winds of hope,
The winds of the future ..
A future unknown.

How beautiful it is when the wind blows,
giving courage and energy to power
whatever it is that needs to power.

All of us are like the windmill,
sometimes we may be stuck
and there is nothing to help us move forward,
but with a little encouragement from others
(like the wind) they will help us find our way,
until we can stand on our own.

A journey is just beginning for many
and is welcomed with joy ...
here's to Winds of Hope!!!



By Michelle Black

A Day with Vivian and Chewy

By Vivian Risby

I was born in Athabasca. I was born into a family with 12 brothers and sisters. My two baby brothers passed away at six months old. Now I only have one brother and four sisters left. Most of my sisters don't speak to me, but I don't care. They only call when they want something from me. When I had a third degree burn on my foot and I was in so much pain, the only people that were there to help me were Ben, Chewy and Laura. I am a lot closer to my street friends than my family. I actually consider them to be my family now.

The money I get is $1,184 a month and my rent is $700, which leaves me next to nothing so I have to pick bottles with my lazy dog Chewy, who doesn't like it when her feet get wet. All bottle pickers only get half of their money at the bottle depot. I count my bottles and most of us do, but they say we don't know how to count. Homeless people are not stupid. They need to survive outside, which is not easy.

I, Vivian, would personally like to thank all of my customers and everyone from the Strathcona Farmers' Market for all of their love and support over all the years.

Editor's note: Vivian has been selling Ablerta Street News for more than 12 years. For Vivian, as for other vendors, the money earned through paper sales helps to top up an insuffcient income. Some of the vendors are eperiencing homelessness, others experience periods of homelessness. Thank you to all of the people who support our vendors!

Vivian and Chewy sell Alberta Street News at the front entrance of the Strathcona Farmers' Market. This is Vivian's regular location to sell papers. Photo by Linda Dumont

Mission

Edmonton Street News Society provides a voice, employment and social support to those who need these, and communicates perspectives dealing with poverty and social justice, by education and communication activities, including publishing a street newspaper.

Values/Beliefs/Guiding Principles

We believe in being inclusive and encouraging
We believe that human rights are fundamental to living together
We believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to earn and control their money
We believe in journalistic and organizational professionalism and integrity
We believe the public needs to know about issues around poverty and social justice
We value community and connecting with others
We value passion and determination
We believe everyone deserves the opportunity to learn, develop and use communication skills

An Unlikely Prince

By Sharon Austin

I stared out the window at the darkness, and a prickle of fear ran through me. A ghostly white figure was gliding silently throuth the trees at the edge of the clearing. The night was black, lit only by a thin sliver of moonlight and the soft glow of the stars. I watched as the figure stretched itself up beside an old deralect truck parked in the field. "Come look at this," I whispered to my husband but before he could come to the window the ghostly form faded back into the woods. "I think it's some kind of animal," I said. "Maybe if I put some food out it'll come back."

"It could be that stone white wolf that all the old hunters claim to have seen running through the forest," he said, "I was sure that was just a tale that the hunters told around the campfire, but maybe the wolf was real."

The next night I put out a bowl of dog food and some bread, then set up watch on the clearing. Sure enough, as soon as it was dark I saw the white form moving cautiously toward the food. In the moonlight I could make out the form of a big dog with long white fur. In a few bites, he devoured the food then turned and vanished into the forest. "It looks like a giant poodle," my youngest son commented and we all agreed that was a fitting name.

Over the next few weeks the giant poodle would come every night but at the slightest movement or if a light flicked on he would bolt for the woods and disappear. One night I tried sitting outside on the deck and I called softly to him: "Here boy, come here." The big dog froze and cocked his head to the side, listening intently as if he was remembering a kind gentle voice from long ago and far away.

What had caused the poor dog to have such fear of humans, I wondered. It would take time, but I was determined to build his trust and show him the warmth of kindness and the security of a safe home. I imagined myself patting that shaggy head and combing the knots from his long ragged fur. "If anyone can tame him, you can," my husband said eyeing our motley group of happy stray cats reposing on every chair.

One day, my son got off the school bus all excited. "I saw the giant poodle up close," he said, "He was running down the side of the highway by the subdivision. He's the weirdest looking dog I've ever seen. That long fur is all in dreadlocks, his legs are really long and he can run like the wind."

That night, we all kept watch for the giant poodle but only two raccoons came out of the woods and began to fight over the food.

"Maybe he got hit on the highway," I worried, "and just when I was starting to make some progress." I kept putting the food out but the giant poodle did not return.

"He's probably like the Littlest Hobo," my son comforted me, "and he's off on another adventure."

About a week later I opened the newspaper and there to my surprise was a big picture of the giant poodle and a captian that read; "Prize Dog, Lost for five Years, Found in Musquash Marsh." A neighbour who lived near the marsh had trapped the dog in her garage and called the S.P.C.A. Someone there realized that this was no ordinary dog, but a pure bred Bergamasco sheep dog that had an identification chip. When the dog's owner was tracked down in Nova Scotia he told how he had let the dog out near the marsh to relieve himself but it had run into the marsh. The dog had become disoriented and the last they saw of him was a tiny white dot running full speed across the salt water marsh. No one answered any of their lost dog ads and they had finally given up.

Sadly, the man was a senior citizen and was no longer in a position to care for his dog, which was sent back to the breeder in Nova Scotia to be resocialized. The giant poodle's real name was Prince Daniel of Skye and he was worth thousands of dollars. I was amazed that underneath that matted dirty fur and scarred up face beat the heart of a prince. Alone and helpless in an alien world, somehow he had survived scrounging for food and sleeping under abandoned buildings or in the woods. How had he ever survived the bone-chilling winters and the deep snow without proper shelter? What cruelty he must have faced to make him so afraid of human contact.

Prince Daniel of Skye reminded me of some of the people who are homeless, who endure the same hardships. Like Prince Daniel, the tragic circumstances of their lives force them to struggle for their survival; but beneath the ragged clothes and unkempt hair beats the heart of someone's mother, or brother, or even a prince.

Crowds can be rented

By Linda Roan

Who could you hire if you wanted to generate excitement to attract attention to a corporation, small business, political campaigns or Red Carpet events. Crowds for Rent is just the company that you could hire. The company is people, the service, an intangible product. For political candidates who lack excitement, an enthusiastic crowd can generate buzz and media coverage. It offers campaign crowds from 10 to 1,000 on short notice, besides paparazzi moments, complete with campaign signs and security guards. Crowds for Rent is used for demonstrations, picket walking and for protests opposing candidates. Others have used them to create the appearance of larger turnouts at their own events. Have we seen Crowds for Rent during recent campaign rallies in the US? Crowds for Rent markets itself as a company that "cultivates perception". In other words, it sells the illusion of dissent. " Paid to protest"

Crowds on Demand (COD) stages phony rallies for political groups and PR stunts.

Founded in September 2012 by a Mr Swart, Crowds on Demand began as a service for wannabe celebrities and expanded into a people provider. They provide enthusiastic crowds for corporate PR stunts, political protests, self-promotions or anyone who wants to experience an "it's all about me" day. For instance, Swart said an internet advertising firm recently hired COD to stage a fake rally at a business conference in New York City where protesters gathered outside the event and pretended to rail against website banner ads. The anti-banner ad protest gave credence to COD's client, which specialized in alternative online advertising solutions.

"We made a whole lot of visibility for them", Swart said. "As everyone was coming into the convention center they saw a huge protest outside. That company said this event increased their sales by 500 percent." Other COD staged events are more serious, like a recent fake protest to raise awareness for mental health. That raises the question: Does manufacturing outrage for the purpose of financial or political gain cross the ethical line? Swart doesn't think so. It makes on wonder if there is anything real out there.

Some people don't realize they're blessed

By John Zapantis

A lot of people don't realize they're blessed to have their health, their intelligence to work and make a livelihood for themselves.

Other people who suffer the misfortune of physical, or mental tragedy can't even pick up a fork to eat a meal, never mind work to live and survive.

People who've had it good all their lives, some nag and complain and wish they were someplace else thinking they could have a better life.

Those that suffer the day to day agony of wishing they could just breath easier without feeling the pain, would never complain like the better off ones, who can't even imagine others always living in emotional or physical pain.

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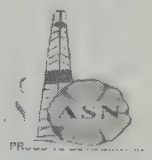

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2. Get a subscription to ASN - for $45 a year the paper will be mailed out.

3. Become a patron - make a commitment to donate monthly to help with production costs.

All money raised will go towards production costs for Alberta Street News and for vendor events.

Contact Linda Dumont at 780-428-0805
dumontlc@hotmail.com

Recognizing Our Disabilities

By Maria B.

In Section 15 the Charter of Rights and Freedoms states very clearly:

EVERY INDIVIDUAL IS EQUAL BEFORE AND UNDER THE LAW AND HAS THE RIGHT TO THE EQUAL PROTECTION AND EQUAL BENEFIT OF THE LAW WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION AND, IN PARTICULAR, WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RACE, NATIONAL OR ETHNIC ORIGIN, COLOUR, RELIGION, SEX, AGE OR MENTAL OR PHYSICAL DISABILITY.

Disability is a complex word to decipher as disabilities, even if they are called the same, could have different results in every individual. But a disability affects the person's body and state of mind. Some people are born with disabilities; other persons could develop a disability any time. Disabilities could remain the same, get worst or even improve. Disabilities could be mild or they could be severe. They could be the cause, as well as the result of illness, injury, genetics, etc.

There are many types of disabilities, such as those that affect a person's vision, movement, thinking, remembering, learning, communicating, hearing and/or mental health.

Disabilities can affect people in different ways, even when one person has the same type of disability as another person. Some disabilities may be hidden or not easy to see. But very clearly we can tell that every human being has a disability that they live with. We are not perfect - we are disabled human beings.

In my case my disability is called Voice Dystonia, also known as laryngeal dystonia and spasmodic dysphonia. In this condition, the vocal cords are affected by involuntary spasms. These involuntary spasms of the vocal cords cause the voice to change in quality. It is breathy and very quiet.

How can voice dystonia be treated? To date, no cure exists for laryngeal dystonia, although a great deal of research is being undertaken around the world. The only thing that has helped me are Botox injections on the vocal chords every six months. I developed Dystonia when my youngest daughter was sexually molested and she tried to kill herself.

In order to help her, I realized I had to be the strong Mom and therefore I held my tears and I held my urge to cry in order to help her. I went to the library and got books on how to help victims of sexual abuse and we took counselling together. The result of this is that she became a strong and admirable person. While we were going through the process to charge the deviant, I got voice dystonia and I now have to live with this as I know it will not disappear.

While the above Section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is very clear, the fact is that a person with a disability such as I have has to be able to suffer the stigma, the kind of stigma that corrodes your sense of being in such a way that if you allow it, it could destroy you. Through this my sense of strength was also tested.

There are people that hold onto and focus on your disability to make you feel "small". They are the

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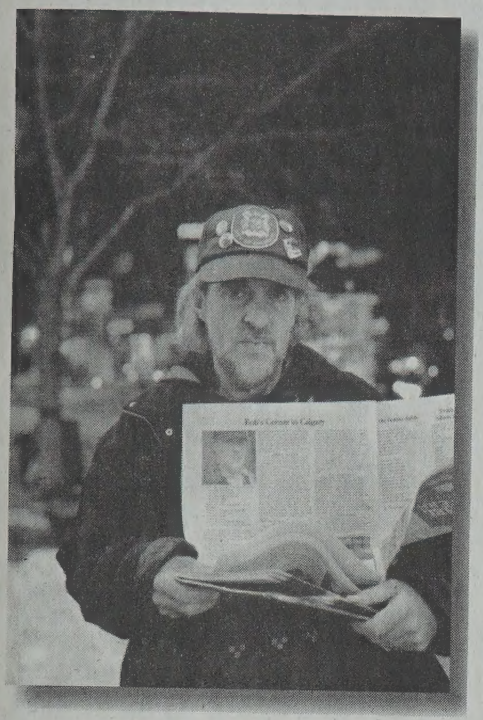
Rob's Corner in Calgary



By Robert Champion

What's on my mind?

Lack of public toilets for Calgary's most vulnerable people of our society, like people living on the street. How some judge others who are less fortunate. How a lot of people don't want to realize that one day they could become homeless. That at any given time they themselves could land in a shelter or find themselves sleeping in a park, under a bridge or along some river.

Still Adjusting

Still adjusting to being single and alone after living with Lorna for 35 years. She would have been 57 years old as of December 30th, 2015. She passed away August 24th at home in our apartment. Still miss her terribly at times, especially when I'm by myself. She was ill for a long time before she left me. I was 62 at the time. Still learning to live with my loss. Believe me, it's not easy.

Darn so Lucky

So lucky to have always had a roof over my head and a warm place to sleep at night. So lucky to have good friends, a place to call home. So lucky to have a street paper to sell every month and to be able to write a column for the Alberta Street News paper. To a lot of people the homeless and low income persons are low lives and have no place in our society or in their world.

Rob's Say of the Day

You just never know when your time is up. It could be at any time. Better to live for the day. Money isn't everything. It won't buy you love or happiness, true happiness. Looking forward to the time I meet up with Lorna. I know she's in a better place and pain free. P.S. Miss her so much I'm heart broken.

Recognizing our Disabilities

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bullies of society, who like to crush the people that they feel fail to meet their expectations. All these rights are worthless if we expect that someone will stand by us and ensure we do not get discriminated against. It is not any different than what happened to my daughter when she was 14. She was a child and she deserved to be respected but evil doers do not have respect for anyone, especially when their deviancy is used on our children. We took the deviant to court and he got "one miserable day" as a sentence so when we look around there are many people that failed us in this respect. I feel our Justice System is not a Justice System, it is a Legal System that caters to and protects the rights of miserable criminals but the law states that these criminals deserve the protection of the law. Indeed the law protects the criminals but the victims are left in the dusk to protect themselves and to ensure that this does not happen to another child.

The fact is that we live in a society where attitudes, stigma and prejudices erect barriers. We must not allow the definition of other people about us to create those barriers. I am not my disability and I am not going to allow people that do not know me to define me because it makes them feel better. We must realize that we are incredible human beings and the lessons that we have learned have made us wiser and more compassionate. Therefore when a person tries to put us down because they feel they do not have a disability, think again because we all have disabilities. Some you can see, some you can't.

WE HAVE TO STAND STRONG AND MAKE OUR VOICES HEARD BECAUSE WE ARE HUMAN BEINGS THAT DESERVE TO BE TREATED WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT.

Edmonton planning for safe injection sites

By Linda Dumont

Edmonton could be opening their first safe injection sites as early as the end of the year said Elaine Hyshka, a public health researcher from the University of Alberta and core member of Access to Medically Supervised Injection Services Edmonton. The group would like to see a network of supervised injection services offered through organizations working with the disadvantaged and homeless people in Edmonton's inner city.

A safe injection site is a legally sanctioned and medically supervised facility designed to reduce nuisance and harm from public drug use and provide a hygienic and stress free environment for illicit drug users when consuming drugs, mostly injecting drugs. It is a harm reduction approach towards drug problems. The facility provides sterile injection equipment, information about drugs and basic health care, treatment referrals and access to medical staff.

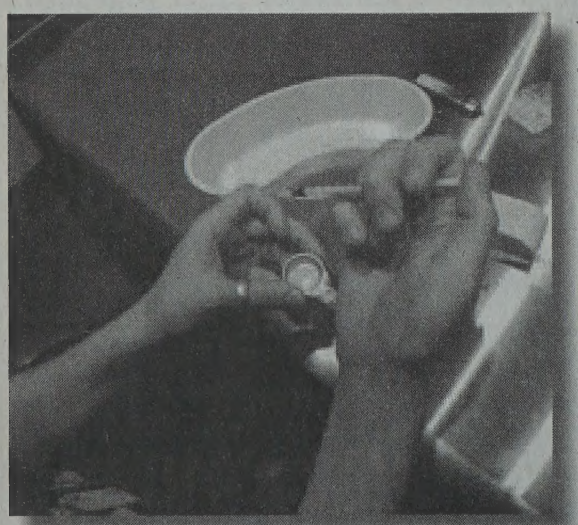
Hyshka said, "We are working to finalize a proposal, then we need to go to stake holders to get funding. It could be at a location at an existing facility that people feel comfortable using. We are committed to building a model that will work well. We know these services can have a positive impact on the community. We want drug users to have a safe place to access sterile supplies 24 hours a day, and also to be able to dispose of them safely."

Polls conducted in the Edmonton Journal and the Edmonton Sun on February 20, 2016 showed a positive response to safe injections sites.

Mayor Don Iverson, in an editorial board meeting, said evidence in favour of harm reduction is "crystal clear". It would save money in the health care system and reduce social disorder by giving an opportunity to intervene for people in distress.

Scott McKeen, Councillor of Ward 6, which includes the inner city, said the city should bear a portion of the cost.

For her research, known as the Edmonton Drug Use and Health Survey, Hyshka interviewed 320 people in the spring and summer of 2014, working mainly out of the Boyle Street Community Services and the Boyle McCauley Health Centre. 91% of the people she interviewed had injected drugs in the previous six months. Although some people used occasionally, most who take drugs like morphine and hydromorphine inject drugs once or twice a day, and those who use stimulants like crack cocaine or methamphetamine can use seven or more needles a day. She found that four out of five of the people injecting drugs did it in a public place, which increased health complications. On the street people lacked sterile water and supplies and that can cause infections leading to abscesses, hepatitis C, HIV and other potentially fatal conditions. More than one quarter of the people interviewed shared needles.



The study showed a clear link between homelessness and unstable housing and drug use. 91% said they would use a safe injection site if there were one available.

In addition to supporting the health needs of the people using the site to inject drugs, the community would benefit in that the use of a safe injection site takes needles and debris off the street.

InSite, Vancouver

Vancouver, B.C. has had a safe injection site since 2003 that provides a safe place where people inject drugs and connect to health care services to treat diseases ranging from primary care to treat infections to addictions counselling and treatment, housing and community supports.

InSite is North America's first legal supervised injection site and is operated by Vancouver Coastal Health that provides funding, senior administration and health care workers for the facility.

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Elaine Hyhska, (left) conducted a research project interviewing 320 drug users in the spring and summer of 2014

InSite operates on a harm reduction model that strives to decrease adverse health, social and economic consequences of drug use. They reported that the rate of drug overdoses significantly decreased in Vancouver after the introduction of InSite in 2003.

Street Works, Edmonton

Edmonton currently has a needle exchange program One and a quarter million needles were handed out to intravenous drug users in 2014-15. While that cost may seem enormous, the cost of the needles is next to nothing compared with the cost of treating one patient with HIV. The program has six locations and the program's van travels to targeted sections of Edmonton six days a week to hand out needles and accept used ones. The program has a 90% return rate.

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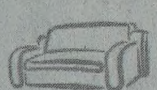

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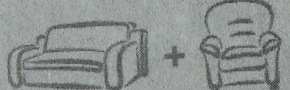

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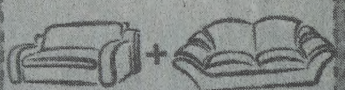

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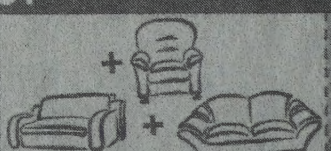

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